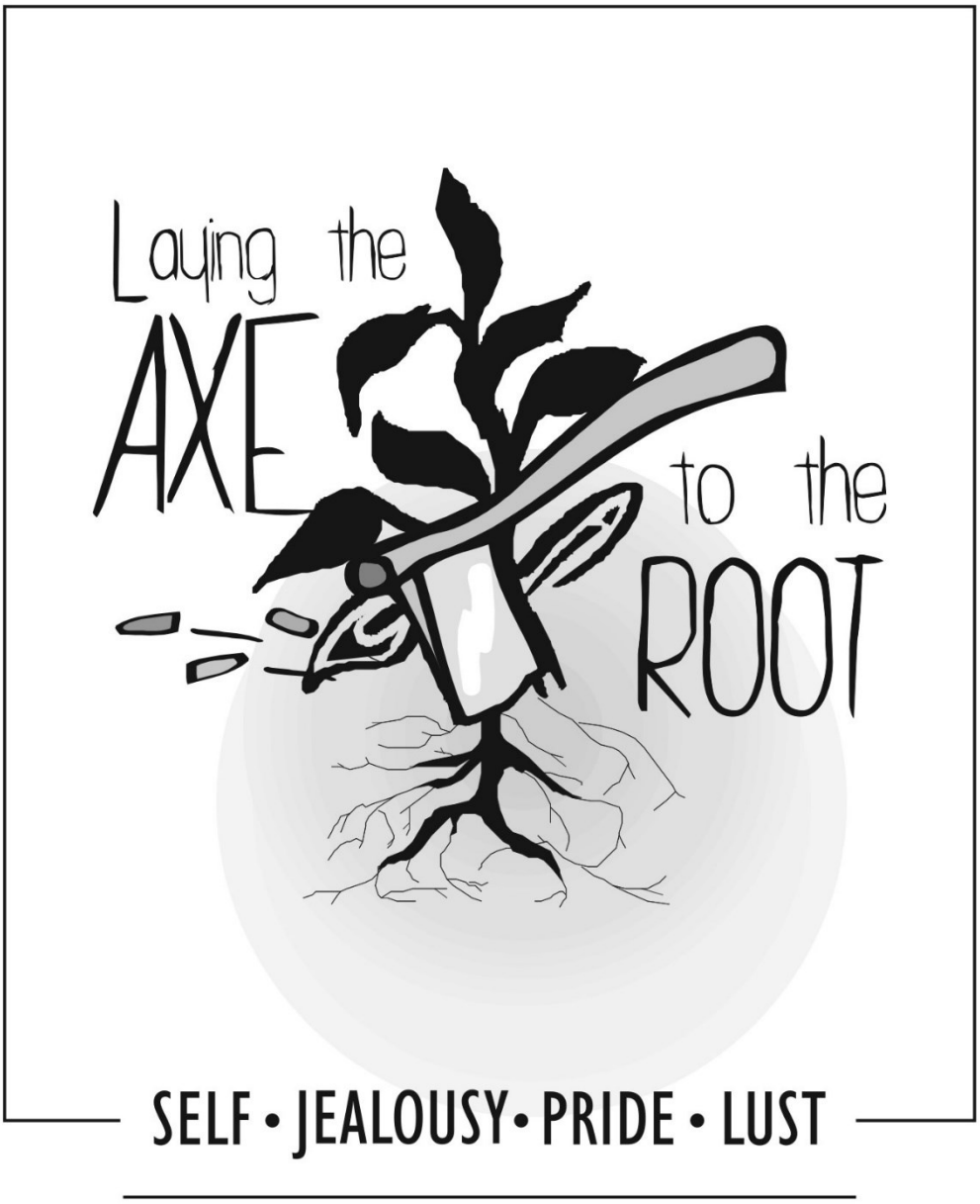

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Laying the
AXE
to the
ROOT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1
1. LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF SELF 4
2. LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF JEALOUSY 17
3. LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF PRIDE 28
4. LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF LUST 42

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 3:10–12
10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

While introducing the ministry of Jesus Christ to the world, John the Baptist said that Jesus had come to do a purifying work. He used the analogy of the axe being laid to the root of the trees that do not bear good fruit. John the Baptist also talked about separating the chaff from the wheat. In essence, both these analogies describe a purifying and cleansing work. The axe being laid to the root of the trees implies a much deeper work than merely cutting off the branches and leaves. Likewise, Christ came to deal with the root of the problem. He goes past the surface and deals with issues that lie hidden beneath what generally meets the eye.

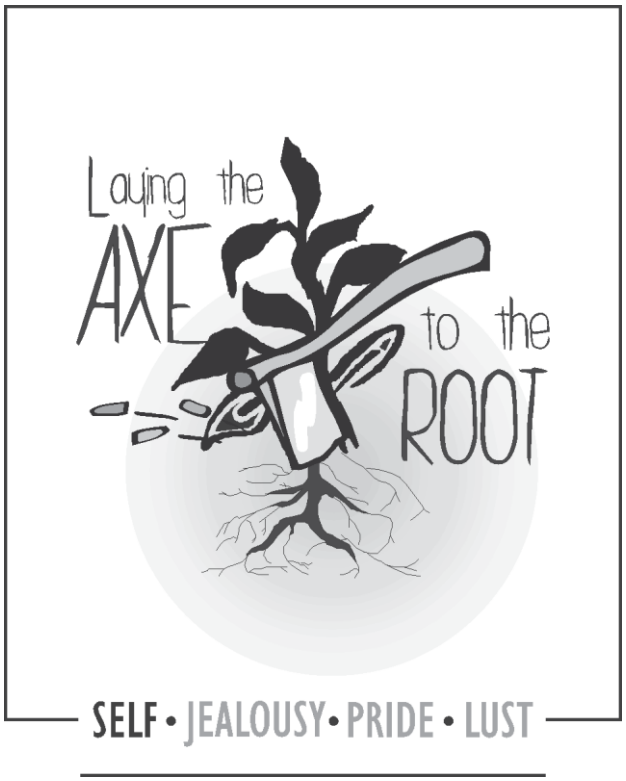
While we emphasize the wonderful baptism of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Matthew 3:11, we overlook the fact that Verse 11 is sandwiched between two verses that talk about a purifying work that Jesus came to do. Many of us have neglected the fact that His coming also signaled the time when "the axe is laid to the root" and when the chaff will be burned with fire. Although we are glad and overjoyed at the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the experience of speaking in tongues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifesting in our lives, we seldom pay attention to the purifying work of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is preceded and followed by a powerful cleansing work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. It is a sad fact that most of us have not opened up our lives to His purifying work and instead opted just for the baptism of the Spirit. It is important that we allow the Lord to do a complete work in us.

Though the Word of God is likened to honey being savored, daily bread being enjoyed, rain bringing refreshing, and a lamp giving direction, it is also like a fire burning up the chaff, a hammer breaking the rock into pieces, and a double-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. A combined effect of the Word as hammer, fire, and sword should have the desired purifying effect on those areas of our lives that need cleansing!

The Bible says, "*And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them*

and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). Having read this Scripture, we sometimes hastily conclude that God will work with us, regardless of how we are. Though it is true that God desires to work with us, there may be certain things in our lives that prevent God from working with us. If there are things in our lives that (tie God's hands and) prevent Him from working with us, then those areas must be dealt with.

Self, jealousy, pride, and lust are some of the negatives that could hinder God from working with us. When we allow the Lord to lay the axe to the root and do a cleansing work in these areas of our lives, we will be better people, not only for God but also for each other.


Laying the
AXE
to the
ROOT
SELF • JEALOUSY • PRIDE • LUST

1. Laying The Axe To The Root Of Self

Very often our whole-hearted desire to glorify Christ and Him alone, gets tainted with the desire to promote our own names, the desire for positions of power, and influence, or the desire for recognition of our gifts, talents, and abilities. If we are not watchful, we will arrive at a place in life where we are motivated more by "self" rather than the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will always glorify Christ (John 16:14) but "self" robs the glory that is due to Christ.

The danger lies in the fact that most of us would never publicly admit that it is self that is motivating us. We may be well-meaning believers who pray, fast, worship, and do all the "right" things. And yet, once we allow the searchlight of God to go past the superficial and shine into the deep recesses of our inner beings, we find that so much of what we do is birthed not in the Spirit, but in self. For most of us, the activity of the self is subtler than our abilities to recognize it.

What is born of the flesh (self) is flesh (self) and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). These have two distinct origins and what is born of self cannot be converted to a work of the Spirit, no matter how well-disguised.

Exodus 30:31–33
31 "And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations.
32 It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you.
33 Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people.'"

The holy anointing oil, symbolizing the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, was not to be put on flesh; neither was it to be duplicated for other purposes. God cannot anoint what is born of self. In fact, there is a danger in trying to imitate the work of the Spirit with the strength of the flesh (Exodus 30:33).

That which is born of the flesh (self) is flesh (self) and people who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). So no matter how great a work, if it is done in the flesh, it is displeasing to God.

If we sow to the flesh (self), we will reap corruption, decay, and ruin (Galatians 6:8). The work that is done motivated by self will not have permanence. These are works of wood, hay, and stubble that will not stand the test of fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

If it is self that motivates us, we cannot be led by the Spirit because the flesh opposes what the Holy Spirit wants (Galatians 5:17). Instead, we ought to seek direction that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let us open our hearts and allow the Lord to lay the axe to the root of self!

Wrong Motives In Ministry

Philippians 1:15–17
15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:
16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;
17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

Apostle Paul states that it is possible for Christians to be doing the right things, but with the wrong motives. He says that some preach the Word—the right thing to do—but are motivated by selfish ambition, jealousy, and strife.

3 John 1:9
I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

Diotrephes was a church member who desired to have preeminence. Motivated by a desire for preeminence, he spoke maliciously against other leaders, refused to be hospitable, and prevented fellow Christians from extending hospitality to other leaders. He was a person who said: “I want to be seen,” “I want to be known,” “I want to be up there in front,” and “I want to be heard.” It is possible to do spiritual things and yet be incorrectly motivated. We cannot justify what we are doing just because it may seem like the right thing to do. God searches the recesses of our hearts to see the motivation behind every action of ours.

2 Corinthians 2:17
For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Paul says that there are many who peddle the Word of God. The word “peddling” means “to adulterate the Word of God for personal gain.” So it is possible for some people to preach the adulterated version of the Word of God, tainted with their personal ideas, for selfish gain. If it happened in Paul’s time, it could certainly happen in our time! When we preach the Word, we need to check our motives for doing so. Is it done for personal gains? Is it done with a selfish ambition? Is it done for preeminence? These are questions that we need to ask ourselves.

Manifestations Of The Root Of Self

How do we know if we have a root of self in us? Sometimes, we presume that we have totally died to self just because we have observed a long period of fasting and prayer. We rely on the exercise of a certain spiritual discipline and fail to examine if the exercise of that discipline has accomplished the primary objective, in this case, dealing with the root of self.

Let us discuss some of the manifestations of the root of self. These include expressions in our attitudes, thinking, or behaviors that are indicative of an underlying root of self. If we identify any of these manifestations or expressions in our attitudes, thinking, or behaviors, we need to ask the Lord to lay the axe to the root of self in our lives.

Self-promotion (wanting to be known and liked by men):

If a Christian has a desire to be known as a wonderful singer or a wonderful preacher, and is motivated by this desire, then this is self-promotion. There is a difference between desiring to be good at what one does and desiring fame or recognition because of that. The questions that we need to keep asking are, "Why do we do the things we do?" and "What is it that really motivates us?" These may be very simple questions, but nevertheless very important ones. If a pastor of a growing church desires to have a congregation of several thousands, the question that he needs to ask himself is: "Do I really want souls to be saved or is there an underlying desire to make a name for myself?" If someone desires to preach the Word, we need to question if it is being done because people will benefit from the Word or, if it is being done because that person wants to be known as a great preacher. The underlying issue is whether the motivation is self-promotion or a genuine interest in benefiting people and glorifying God alone.

John 5:41,44
41 I do not receive honor from men.
44 How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?

Jesus was addressing the religious leaders of His time and pointed to them that they were eager to receive honor from each other and had no regard for the honor that comes from God. We need to come to a place, where like Jesus, we do not need to receive honor from men. If we are being honest with ourselves, we will realize that very few of us can make such a claim! We should no longer be concerned if people praise or applaud us. Instead, our only desire should be to seek the honor that comes from God above. Let us preach, sing, or minister with the sole intent of glorifying God and meeting people's needs, without any desire for honor from men. **We know we are walking free from self when the applause of heaven is far more valuable to us than the accolades of men. When our desire is only for affirmation from God and is untainted by any desire for affirmation**

from men, then our hearts are pure and free from self.

John 7:18
He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

We need to ask ourselves whose glory we seek, God's or our own? When we make announcements or place advertisements, as ministers, churches, ministries, or Christian organizations, we must be very careful that we do not promote ourselves, but promote the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, a name is necessary for the purpose of identification and for other legal purposes, but it is important to acknowledge the fact that the purpose is not to promote self. **When we speak from self, of ourselves, trying to build our reputations and solicit praise from men, we seek our own glory. Only when we truly seek to glorify God, and Him alone, are our hearts pure and no unrighteousness is found in us.**

1 Corinthians 10:31
Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Self-promotion is rampant today even in the Christian ministry. People are so eager to get their names or the names of their ministries out, and become prominent overnight. We observe so much of self-seeking—ministers competing about "who is more anointed," ministries working to promote their own wares, and a whole lot more. Self seems to be so alive and dominant. It is time to stop and honestly evaluate the motivations of our hearts. Are we truly seeking the honor that comes from God above or are we so preoccupied with self and promoting self, that we have neither the time nor the sensitivity to listen to the gentle correction of the Spirit? Whatever is done must be done with the sole intent of glorifying God.

Selfish ambition (wanting to be known as someone who accomplished great things for God)

Philippians 2:1–4
1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,
2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul warns us that nothing should be done out of selfish ambition. This however implies that it is possible to do things for God, and be motivated by selfish ambition. Selfish ambition, in this sense, is simply an intense desire to be known as someone who achieved great things for God. God does have wonderful plans for each of us. He does want us to

be movers and shakers for His Kingdom on the earth. But in all our efforts for the Kingdom, if our motivation is to make a name for ourselves instead of making Him known, then we are motivated by selfish ambition. Our motivation must be a sincere desire to see people ministered to, irrespective of whether they know our names and who we are. If "self" is going to be the "hero" at the end of it all, then it is selfish ambition that is the motivator—not the love of Christ.

An important question to ask is, "In my dreams and visions, who is the 'hero'?" Is it God or me? How often have we heard people testify, "I prayed, and they got healed!" The emphasis is on the "I" rather than on God who healed and without Him no prayer of ours would avail anything. The one receiving glory seems to be the person who prayed rather than the God who answered the prayer! We can hold a big Gospel crusade but if the motivation is selfish ambition, then that crusade does not please God because they that are in the flesh cannot please God. People can still believe the Word and receive in such a crusade because God always watches over His Word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12). And so, by virtue of the Word of God that was spoken, God will confirm His Word in people's lives. However, it is more important to do the will of the Father than to do many wonderful works in His name, that do not originate from His heart (Matthew 7:21–23).

The antidote for selfish ambition, as Paul instructs, is to have a humble mind and to regard others better than us. We need to give preference to others and look out for their interests—their benefits, their well-being, and their blessings.

Self-reliance (dependence on self instead of dependence on the Holy Spirit)

Philippians 3:3
For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:16
Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

1 Corinthians 3:21
Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours.

"Self-reliance" is dependence on our own or on another's abilities rather than on the Lord. Often, we arbitrarily venture into something because of our own education, experiences, capabilities, and skills. We are confident in our own abilities and we unconsciously think, "Even if God does not help me, I can get the job done." Of course, we do not verbalize this! Rather, we are overly cautious to camouflage our self-reliance with appropriate spiritual statements.

Like Apostle Paul, we must learn to look at who people are in the spirit rather than who they are in the flesh. We do not evaluate people by what they have or how they look in the natural. However, the common practice in Christendom is that we often seek to know people "after the flesh." We secretly long for connections with those who are highly regarded by men, with the hope that they would "pull us up" in life and ministry.

Is this not a common thing in our churches here in India? How we look out for foreigners, are so quick to put them on a pedestal, please them, and get all their contact details! We secretly hope that this connection would open an opportunity to get invited abroad. Almost all of us are guilty of doing this at some point. But Paul is warning us not to regard people after the flesh. We must treat everyone equally—not based on the nationality, position, color of one's skin, and so on.

If God does not bring about these divine connections and we go about seeking them, motivated by our own personal drive for achievement, then we are in the realm of self-reliance—dependence on our own or some other person's ability. This is dependence on the "flesh" and is not pleasing to God.

John 15:4-5
4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.
5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Without the Lord, we can do nothing. It is not so much our inability to do things. Of course, many of us can accomplish things by our own abilities. However, without Christ we will not be able to do things of significance in God's eyes, things that are of eternal permanence.

Self-protection (considering life too dear to oneself)

All of us have this quality of self-preservation inherent in us that is God-given and necessary. We do not run randomly across a busy street or jump off the housetop, simply because we value life, especially our own. However, self-preservation that keeps us from obeying God is unhealthy. If our self-preservation takes precedence over the call of God on our lives and keeps us from following through in obedience, then we are in a dangerous position, spiritually. It is a manifestation of the root of self and must be destroyed. Wanting to preserve one's life, position, possession, or reputation at the expense of obeying God or being unwilling to step out in faith is a clear indication that self is still dominant and needs to be dealt with.

Acts 20:22–24
22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me

there,
23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.
24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

For example, let us consider a young man from the city of Bangalore, who loves the Lord. Let us assume that this young man can travel to America, get a good education, and become successful in his career. He has everything going—a good job, a nice place to stay, and is on the verge of getting married and settling there. His parents and grandparents, back home in India are all proud of his achievements. At this point, he begins to recognize God's leading to move back to some place in India and do something for the Kingdom of God. This young man would then be at a very important point in his life. He must decide if he will obey the Lord or go his own way. If he chooses to stay on in America because he considers it as being an opportunity of a lifetime—something he should not let go of—this would be disobedience to God because of self-preservation. However, if the young man lets go of what he has in America—the success, comforts, achievements, and reputation—and takes the step to obey God by moving to India and doing what God has called him to do, this would be dying to self! A thing that God will be well pleased in!

John 12:24-25
24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.
25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

"Self-protection" means we protect ourselves—our own lives. When we do this, we abide alone. Self-protection will prevent the fruitfulness and multiplication that God desires in our lives. **Our desire for self-preservation—of preserving our own lives at the expense of obeying God—will keep us from multiplying and being fruitful for God's Kingdom**. It is only when we die to self that we will be fruitful.

For instance, in Christian ministry, we must die to our reputations to be used by God in the supernatural. Each time we yield ourselves to the Spirit, to flow in the prophetic, or in the gifts of the Spirit—we die to self. We need to die to self to be able to step out in faith. We are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit. We are laying our reputations on the line because if we make a mistake, we risk being labeled a false prophet! However, it takes faith to lay self aside, step out, and flow in the Spirit. It takes faith to allow His gifts to flow through us, to minister to the needs of God's people. It is necessary to die to self to flow in the Spirit. The tendency to be self-preserving consequently limits what the Holy Spirit desires to do.

Self-Humiliation (feeling good when putting oneself down)

Another manifestation of self that might seem a little contradictory to the previous three

manifestations of self, that we have addressed, is "self-humiliation." Humility is essential. However, there is a form of humility that resembles true humility but is really born out of self. We call this "self-humility"—a feeling that people have when they put themselves down. They feel good when they talk low about themselves, about being poor, inferior, and so on. They feel good that they feel bad! They think this is humility and that God accepts them for this! For instance, when we are complimented for a good song that we sang, we need to be able to receive the compliment and pass on the praise to God, instead of denying the fact that we can even sing! That would be false humility, that is full of self. Instead, we must graciously receive the compliment and give God the glory. That would be the right way to respond.

2 Corinthians 3:5
Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.

Romans 15:15–19
15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,
16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.
18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—
19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

While we are totally aware that our sufficiency comes from God, we must not put on a pretense of humility where we fail to acknowledge the capabilities, resources, gifts, callings, and ministries given to us by God. Paul was a person who spoke boldly and was aware that he was called by God to be a minister of God. Paul "boasted" of the things that the Lord had done through him. He did not walk with a false pretense of self-humility.

Moses was a man of two extremes. When he first began, he was extremely self-confident. Having been trained at Pharaoh's palace, Moses was mighty in words and deeds. When he knew that he was raised by God to deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, he thought that he could accomplish it on his own. He went out driven by self-confidence and his dependence on self (Acts 7:22–25). God had to deal with that and Moses ended up being in the wilderness. Forty years later, he was so "self-abased" that he was unwilling to do what God wanted him to and made excuses of his inability. He requested God to send someone else. This angered God (Exodus 4:13-14).

Sometimes, our pretense of humility could anger God. We may think that we are being humble but end up annoying God. We need to acknowledge what God has given us and not walk in a false pretense of humility. Lay the axe to the root of self-humiliation and become confident in God!

Dying To Self—Apostle Paul's Testimony

Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Philippians 1:21
For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 3:7
But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15
14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;
15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

As Christians, we no longer live for "self." We live for the One who loved us and died for us. "It is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me" is our theme. This means that we are willing to lay aside "self"—selfish desires, selfish ambitions, self-promotion, self-protection, and so on, and choose to do the things that the Lord would have us do.

1 Corinthians 15:31-32
31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

Paul said, "I die daily." He lived a crucified life. It was true that everyday his life was in danger and close to death because of his persecutors. And yet the life he lived was a crucified one. Death to self is not a one-time event. We are to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23) because if we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciples (Luke 14:27).

What does it mean to take up the cross? Sometimes while talking about taking up our cross, people paint a picture of someone who has renounced the world and lives as though he were an ascetic. But "taking up the cross" has more to do with who we are on the inside than with what we have on the outside. The cross is a place of death—death to self. Someone can live in a hut without any physical comforts and still be self-willed, self-ruled, self-centered, pursuing selfish ambitions, and seeking to promote self. If so, that is not really "taking up the cross." Another person can live in a nice house, drive a nice car, and still be truly dead to self. He can have a humble spirit that is free of self. So "to take up our cross" and "to die to self" has more to do with who we are on the inside, than on outward forms of piety and religiosity.

2 Corinthians 4:5
For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

Whom are we proclaiming, promoting, and glorifying? Is it us or is it Jesus? At the end of it all, if people leave talking about us instead of Jesus, then we have not really preached Christ. If people are attracted to us instead of being drawn closer to Jesus, then we have not really preached Christ.

Making This Relevant To Daily Life

At Home—As Husband and Wife

Each time we give up our rights, for instance our right to be served, our right to be attended to, our right to be heard—we die to self!

Develop the ability to give, without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:30).

Develop the ability to forgive, instead of retaliating. Do not shoot back.

Develop the ability to love without expecting anything in return. Be able to say, "I love you even if you do not love me." This is true agape love! Agape love does not depend on having its own "love tank" being regularly filled up. Agape love originates from God and has only one "love language"—the ability to love without expecting anything in return. Agape love does not depend on what you give, how much you touch, words of affirmation, or any such things! While all these other things are nice things to do and must be done, remember we are called to walk in the God-kind of love! The kind of love that loves without expecting anything in return!

At Home—As Parents

We should not enforce our selfish dreams on our children. We must have the courage to listen to God and encourage our children to pursue God's unique call on their lives. We should not make the mistake of trying to fulfill our dreams through our children's lives. This would be selfishness. Let us allow our children to pursue God's dreams for their lives. We should not try to live a "second" life through our children.

At Home—As Children

Do not be self-willed and rebellious. Die to self by learning to obey!

Instead of being so wrapped up in your own needs and feelings, consider the feelings and needs of your parents!

At School/College (Teens/Twenties)

Walk in love toward your peers. Love and forgive instead of retaliating.

Give up your opportunity for somebody else. “Sow” that opportunity as a seed and believe God for your reward!

On the Job

Let us learn to yield instead of insisting on our own ideas.

Let us acknowledge our faults. Let us not be afraid to say that we were wrong. Let us be bold enough to apologize. When we destroy our pride, we die a thousand deaths to self!

In the Church

Let us not compete with one another for position, prominence, and recognition in church. Whatever we do, let us do it with a selfless servant’s heart. Let us remember that if we try to exalt ourselves, we will be abased but if we humble ourselves, we will be exalted (Luke 14:7–11).

Let us not try to promote ourselves, our talents, gifts, anointing, or calling in the church. Let us glorify Jesus and Him alone, in all that we say and do.

Let our desire, to be heard, seen, recognized, and acknowledged, be put to death. Let us die to our need for self-importance. Let God be given preeminence in every area of our lives.

Let us die to our reputations in order to be used by God in the supernatural.

In the Ministry

Husbands who are called to ministry should be careful not to force their wives to give up their call on their lives and make them follow into ministry, especially if they do not feel called to the ministry. That would be a selfish thing to do. Instead, wives should be allowed and encouraged to pursue God’s call on their lives, even if it is in the professional world.

When we, who are used to physical comforts, go out to minister in villages, we must learn to adjust, accommodate, and be content with the facilities provided. Let us not demand comforts. Though it will be hard on our flesh, it would be a good opportunity to die to

self!

Repentance And Dying To Self

If we are to journey into higher realms in God, we must first be willing to depart from the things that keep us from getting there. We must come to a state of having departed from self. We cannot give God the glory that is due to Him if we continue to be rooted in self. "*No flesh should glory in His presence*" (1 Corinthians 1:29). Let us be like John the Baptist and be willing to say, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30). Let us allow God to truly see our innermost thoughts and check if our actions are in any way motivated by self. "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23-24). Let us check our motivation. If our motivation originates from self-promotion, selfish ambition, or self-protection, let us stop ourselves. Let us not even attempt to proceed without dealing with the root of self in our lives. Let us ask the Lord to change our hearts.

Let us deal with the root of self; let us crucify our wrong motives, our desire for preeminence, selfish ambition, and self-seeking. Let us be transparent before God and allow the Holy Spirit to do a deep cleansing work in our lives.

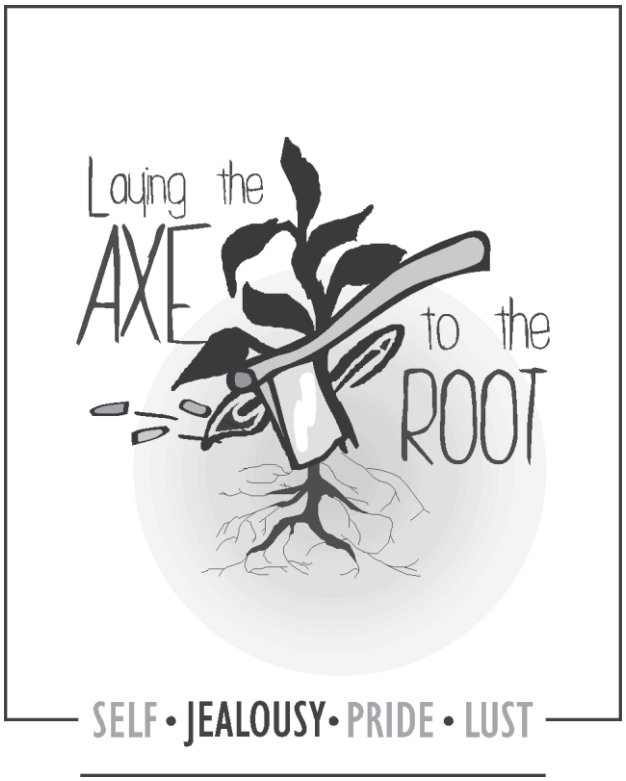
Prayer

Father, I acknowledge that my motives have not always been pure. There have been times when I desired to promote myself. There have been times when I touched the glory that belonged to you alone. There have been times when I failed to acknowledge Your plans and purposes for me and instead pursued my own selfish interests.

Father, I desire to live a life free from self. Lord I pray that You lay the axe to the root of self in me. Help me to die to self and live unto You.

Purify my motives. Give me the grace to humble myself, knowing that You will lift me up in due time. Let me not seek the praises of men but seek the honor that comes from You alone.

Father, I thank You that You are at work in me by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen!


Laying the
AXE
to the
ROOT
SELF • JEALOUSY • PRIDE • LUST

2. Laying The Axe To The Root Of Jealousy

Another term for the word "jealousy" is "envy." There are certain things in life that could be very dangerous to us and one such thing is jealousy. Many of us fail to realize how serious this can be. We sometimes dismiss it as a personality conflict. However, it is much more than that and needs to be dealt with the seriousness it deserves. In this chapter, we desire to understand what jealousy is, the seriousness of it, and then get around to dealing with it. The Word of God will help us clearly understand what jealousy is. We must allow the Holy Spirit to pull out jealousy by the root, so that each one of us can truly be free from it.

Galatians 5:19–21
19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Both jealousy and envy are mentioned in the Scripture above. We realize the seriousness of these when we read that those who walk in jealousy and envy "will not inherit the Kingdom of God." The Bible clearly states that those who continue in them will not inherit the Kingdom of God. That is a very serious issue and hence must be dealt with.

We encounter jealousy almost everywhere—among siblings, husbands and wives, employees, employers, and the like. There can be jealousy between friends and peers. Jealousy could be found in the church among God's people and even among ministers of God.

Jealousy Has To Be Dealt With

1 Corinthians 3:3
For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Here, Paul is addressing Spirit-filled, tongue-talking Christians—who know about flowing in the Spirit—and calls them "carnal" because there was envy, strife, and jealousy among them. These people were still being ruled by their flesh.

Philippians 1:15,17
15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:
17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

Paul indicates to us that even doing something as spiritual as preaching Christ could be done out of jealousy. Though preaching Christ is the right thing to do, when it is motivated by jealousy, it is not right in the sight of God. If the primary reason a preacher wants to appear on television is because someone else is on television, then the motivation is wrong. Even while being zealous for God and wanting to preach His Word, if the motivation is jealousy, then it is very dangerous. Jealousy is a work of the flesh and whatever is done motivated by jealousy—however spiritual—cannot be pleasing to God because, Romans 8:8 says, *"Those who are in the flesh cannot please God*."

Numbers 5:14 talks about the spirit of jealousy between a husband and a wife. (So, sometimes jealousy could be demonic in origin being inspired by a spirit of jealousy.)

Jealousy In The Bible

There are several instances of jealousy in the Bible.

Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel had different occupations. Cain was a farmer while Abel was a shepherd. Both brought offerings to the Lord. Cain brought an offering of produce from the ground and Abel brought an animal as an offering. The Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice which caused Cain to be jealous. The Bible says that Cain became angry and jealous and consequently killed his own brother (Genesis 4:1–9).

Joseph and His Brothers

Although Jacob had 12 sons, he loved Joseph the most, thus causing jealousy among the brothers. This should serve as a warning to parents to ensure that they treat their children impartially, without displaying favoritism, because that could breed jealousy among siblings. Jacob honored Joseph with a multi-colored coat. In addition, Joseph received dreams that revealed his coming to a place of honor. All of these made Joseph's brothers very jealous, to the point of wanting to kill him. By divine intervention, Joseph was brought into Egypt (Genesis 37:3-4,8; Acts 7:9).

Saul and David

1 Samuel 18:5–30 depicts the jealousy that developed between King Saul and David. David had slain Goliath with God's help even though he was just a shepherd boy. When David returned from the battlefield, the people were singing songs of praise about David and Saul. They said that Saul had slain his thousands, but David his ten-thousands. Saul felt jealous because the people attributed greater honor to David. These were the first seeds

of jealousy in Saul's heart, which led him to a place where he eventually wanted to kill David. Saul began to make plans to kill David. He made David the captain of his army, so that he would be in the forefront of battle. To make sure David was killed, he offered his daughter in marriage in exchange for killing one hundred Philistines.

Some people face jealousy in their workplaces. The manager to whom they report could be a "King Saul" in their life. The manager feels insecure that the subordinate is excelling at work or fears that the subordinate may overtake him at work. Consequently jealousy breeds in the manager's heart. As a result of this jealousy, the manager maybe hurtful or rude, making the subordinate wonder what his mistake had been.

In 1 Samuel 18, we see repeatedly that David behaved wisely. He did not retaliate or feel the need to put Saul in his place. Instead he behaved wisely and God intervened and took care of his situation. If you encounter jealousy at your workplace, it would be a wise thing not to retaliate. Just behave wisely. Let God intervene—He surely will!

Dealing With Jealousy

Even before we attempt to deal with jealousy, we must first admit that jealousy exists in our hearts. Most of us tend to conceal our jealousy. For instance, if a friend informs us that he has bought a brand of car that we think is better than ours, we may feel slightly envious. The right thing to do would be to admit that there is jealousy and forsake it, instead of concealing it by saying, "Praise the Lord brother!" without meaning it or truly rejoicing with him. It is important for us to come out of denial. Concealing our jealousy with denial is not going to help address the problem. Instead, we must be transparent before God. We could ask God to help us get rid of jealousy, and He will! However, if we continue in denial, it shuts the door for God to intervene and He cannot help us.

Manifestations Of Jealousy

Murder

Cain murdered Abel because of jealousy (Genesis 4:8). Though most of us may be quick to conclude that we do not share Cain's murderous feelings, a look at the following verses will make us think again!

Mathew 5:21-22
21 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'
22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

1 John 3:15
Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Jesus said that if we are angry with someone without a cause, we are the same as being murderers. When I hate another, I am a murderer.

Outbursts of Anger

Proverbs 6:34
For jealousy is a husband's fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

The context here is that of a wife who has committed adultery and whose husband is furious. Jealousy is what has provoked this husband to wrath. There may be other circumstances where jealousy could provoke a husband to wrath. Often, outbursts of anger could be due to a root of jealousy. Husbands and wives need to examine themselves concerning their anger toward their spouses. Perhaps, the root cause of the outbursts is indeed jealousy. This jealousy may have been fueled by the fact that the wife is earning a few thousand rupees more and the husband has been trying his best to catch up with her. This feeling of inferiority may have been building up within the husband for a long time, and it suddenly finds release in outbursts of wrath.

We may worship God intensely when we gather in public but the questions that remain to be asked are: How do we behave in the privacy of our homes? How do we treat our spouses? How do we react to situations at home? The answers to these questions may point to the existence of a root of jealousy!

Seeking Revenge

Romans 12:19–21
19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
20 Therefore, "If your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Bible tells us not to take revenge. This thought is continued in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 which states, "*See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all*."

We may resort to sophisticated ways of avenging ourselves. Our actions may not be overtly revengeful. Yet, we cannot hide our hearts from God. At home, we may refuse to talk, refuse a cup of coffee, or refuse to press clothes in a bid to get back at someone at home; at work we may withhold vital information from others. This kind of behavior is seen even among pastors and preachers of the Word. For example, a pastor might have

been invited to a conference by a fellow minister and may feel that he was not given enough recognition at the conference. So, in quiet retaliation, the pastor who felt "wronged" would invite the other minister of God to a conference he is hosting and in a subtle way administer a similar or worse treatment! The root cause for this kind of behavior is a spirit of jealousy.

Unkindness, Ill feeling, Resentment

Proverbs 27:4
Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

If anger is cruel, then jealousy is (being) twice as cruel. Being unkind or resentful toward people could sometimes be due to jealousy. Songs of Solomon 8:6b says, "*For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame*." Jealousy is as cruel as the grave. So sometimes our rude and unkind behavior to people may be due to jealousy. We should not merely try to change the behavior but deal with the root cause. The root cause of unkindness between siblings could be jealousy.

Division

This again is caused by jealousy. Many divisions are caused because one person had jealousy in his heart. This eventually spreads and results in strife and division.

Extreme Competitiveness

Healthy competition at the right place is good. For example, on the sports field, it is only right to be competitive and desire victory. You desire to do your best and outdo the others. This kind of competitiveness is good and enables us to excel. But the mistake we most often make is that we carry this kind of competition into the House of God, creating havoc. We begin to compete with each other, even in our spiritual lives. For instance, one person wants to observe a longer fast than another—motivated purely by a competitive spirit. We want to do something much bigger than what the other person is doing. Extreme spiritual competitiveness may drive us to pursue seemingly great spiritual goals. However, these are not pleasing in God's eyes because they are motivated by jealousy.

Strife and Contentions

In Proverbs 10:12, we see that "hatred stirs up strife." This hatred could be birthed out of jealousy resulting in strife.

Isolation, Independence, and Insecurity

Jealousy creates insecurity and causes one to isolate oneself and become independent. For example, some pastors instruct their congregation to isolate themselves from other ministers, ministries, and even from other believers. This is very often due to insecurity that stems from jealousy. God's people must have the liberty to receive from other genuine ministers, and fellowship with believers who do not belong to the same local church.

Over-protection

Sometimes what appears to be genuine concern can be an act of over-protection and could be birthed from jealousy. For example, a husband could convince his professionally skilled wife to stay at home under the pretext that he will take care of the entire family's needs. However, this over-protectiveness could really come from a root of jealousy, where the husband is jealous of the wife. He is probably jealous of her interacting with other men at work. Perhaps he is insecure that she might earn more than him. Hence the over-protective behavior could in all probability be due to jealousy.

Pettiness

Often, when little things get blown out of proportion and mountains are made from molehills, the root cause of it all could be jealousy.

Consequences Of Jealousy

Allowing jealousy to reside in our hearts could have serious consequences. When we understand the consequences of jealousy, we would be more than willing to lay the axe to the root of jealousy!

Jealousy Is Destructive

Jealous kills! "*For wrath kills a foolish man, and envy slays a simple one*" (Job 5:2). We cannot continue for long in jealousy, without being hurt. Jealousy slowly but surely destroys the one in whom it resides.

Jealousy Affects Our Health

"*A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones*" (Proverbs 14:30). Jealousy in the heart affects physical and emotional health. At times, when people are afflicted with physical ailments, the root cause may be jealousy.

Jealousy Blurs Our Vision, Causes Us to Lose Focus

Jealousy blurs our vision, causes us to lose focus and get distracted. "*Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day*" (Proverbs 23:17). For instance, in our place of work, when we see people who do not fear God and yet are prosperous, we must be careful that we do not envy them. Our envy of people who are ungodly and yet apparently prosperous could cause us to lose our focus.

Jealousy Blinds and Prevents Us from Seeing the Light

Jealousy was one of the main reasons why Jesus was put to death. The chief priests had become jealous of Jesus. "*But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy"* (Mark 15:9-10). The chief priests became jealous of Jesus because of the fame that He had and the miracles He performed.

Jealousy blinded their hearts, and they could not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

Jealousy Causes Trouble

Hebrews 12:14-15
14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:
15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

If we are not careful about the root of bitterness and jealousy, it will not only affect us but those around us as well. We need to deal with jealousy, the moment we sense it within us.

Envy and Strife Open Doors to Confusion and Every Demonic Work

The Bible says that where there is jealousy, there are two deadly things—confusion and every evil work.

James 3:14–16
14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.
15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.
16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Jealousy opens the door for confusion and every kind of demonic work. Sometimes, when people seek deliverance and ask for prayer, permanent solutions are not experienced because people keep the "door" open to demonic activity. For the "door" to remain closed, the root of the problem must be dealt with. **As long as there is jealousy in our**

hearts, the door remains open for confusion and every demonic work to have access into our lives.

Therefore, jealousy is a serious issue. It affects our health, blurs our vision to the truth and makes us lose focus, causes trouble, and opens the door to every kind of demonic work.

Getting Rid Of Jealousy

How does one deal with jealousy and live free from it? Here is what the Scriptures teach us:

Walk in Love

Love is not jealous or envious (1 Corinthians 13:4). Each one of us, as believers, can walk in the love of God because "*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*" (Romans 5:5). Pray and be determined to allow the love of God to flow through you and toward the person whom you feel jealous about. Tell yourself, "I will choose to walk in love towards my friend." Walking in God's love will keep jealousy out of your heart and mind.

Rejoice in Others' Blessings

We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Rejoice with the friend who may have purchased a new car. Rejoice with the person who has received a special provision or miracle. Often, we sing, "How great thou art!" and declare God as the One who created the stars, the rolling thunder and so on. However, we must also learn to sing, "How great thou art!" in response to seeing a friend being blessed with a new car, seeing another person receive a miracle. and so on. It is the same God at work! We must learn to rejoice in each other's blessings!

Galatians 5:26
Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Understand that Each One Is Different

We can avoid being jealous of others when we understand that each one has been gifted differently by God. Each one has been designed for a unique purpose (Romans 12:4–6). The Scripture teaches us that there are different gifts and ministries from God and differing ways in which He works through us (1 Corinthians 12:5–7). For instance, someone preaches, while another sings and yet another plays an instrument. We must learn to rejoice in the way God has made us. We must learn not to compare our gifts,

anointing, and so on. We will not be judged solely for the gifts that we were given, but for the faithfulness with which we used them to glorify God and serve His purposes. Let us learn to be grateful for the gifts that we have received. Avoid comparing yourself with others and you can avoid becoming jealous of others.

See Things from God's Perspective

Let us learn to see things from God's perspective. When it is all over and done on the earth, only God will receive the glory and He alone will be worshipped. When we look at things from this perspective, there will be no room for jealousy. Those things that seem so important, causing jealousy, will not matter anymore.

We need to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge feelings of jealousy in our lives and forsake it. We must continually guard our hearts from jealousy. We need to make a conscious effort to never be jealous of anyone. God cannot work through us if we have jealousy in our hearts. Let us confess, repent, and receive the Spirit's refining work!

We need to guard our hearts from every root of jealousy. Sometimes, things may have been meted out unfairly. We may have been unfairly treated and others may have received what should have been ours. However, this still is no reason to be jealous. Just let go of jealousy and let God be God. Say, "God I do not want to be jealous of any person."

If we are a preacher or a minister of God and see others who may seem more anointed, have more results, have a flourishing ministry, and so on, we should not allow jealousy to creep into our hearts. Praise God for them! Rejoice with them, as a fellow minister of God. We must guard our hearts against jealousy or else we risk opening the door to every kind of evil.

If we have been victims of jealousy, then we need to forgive the people involved and allow God to take care of the situation.

- Is there jealousy in our lives?
- Is there jealousy in the House of God?
- Are we jealous of our spouses?
- Are we jealous of our siblings who have accomplished much, are more talented or gifted?
- Are we jealous of our colleagues who have gone ahead of us?

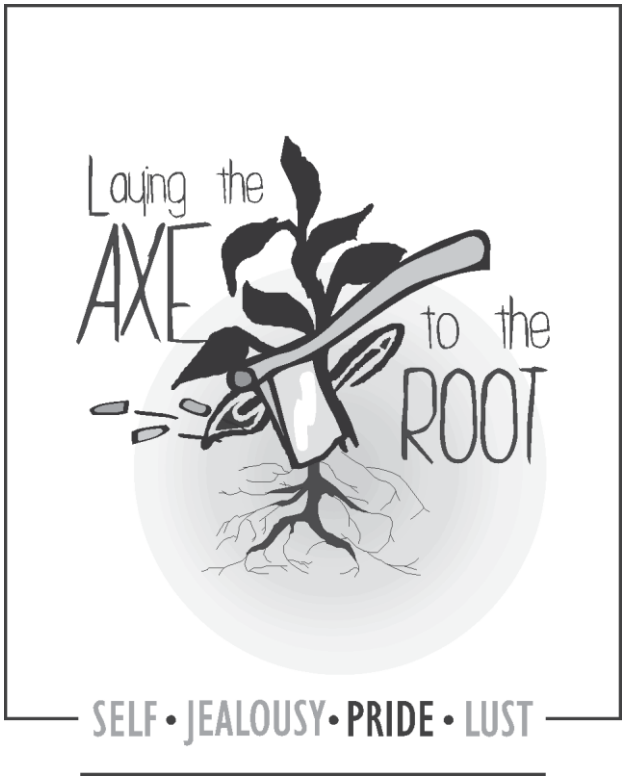
Let us allow the Spirit to lay the axe to the root of jealousy in our lives!

Prayer

God, there is jealousy in my life. I want to live a life free from jealousy. Lord, I pray that you lay the axe to the root of jealousy in my heart. Father have your way in my life. Lord, enable me to rejoice in another person's blessings; enable me to realize that each person is made differently; make me realize that I am unique. Lord make me walk in love; enable me to be faithful to the responsibilities you have given me, without comparing with others and without being jealous; enable me to guard my heart against jealousy and close the door to every kind of evil in my heart. Lord, enable me to have a godly perspective in every area of my life; Lord, I thank you that you alone will finally receive all the glory. Lord, I choose to forgive the person who has hurt me; I choose not to have bitter feelings.

Let no one do anything motivated by jealousy; Father, let there be no jealousy in the House of the Lord.

Father, I thank you that you are at work in my heart. In Jesus name I pray, Amen!


Laying the
AXE
to the
ROOT
SELF • JEALOUSY • PRIDE • LUST

3. Laying The Axe To The Root Of Pride

Pride is simply defined as arrogance, haughtiness, self-exaltation, self-importance, boasting, and indulging in self-glorification, and is an attitude that makes us think we are superior to others. There is a "pride of life" which is not from our heavenly Father, but is a prevalent part of the world system. The world considers it "normal" for people to think highly of oneself and to think highly of certain things. If we are not careful, we could get trapped in the same pattern of thinking and perception of things.

1 John 2:16
For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

What does one find in the world? The lust of the flesh, the deceitful desires of the flesh, the sinful desires of the eyes, and the pride of life which are all part of the world system. Pride makes us feel that we can accomplish something on our own. As believers, if we are not careful, pride can easily seep into our lives as we go about in this realm. We are probably very cautious about the lust of the flesh—for example, adultery—and about the lust of the eyes because of which we refrain from looking at things that are wrong. Pride on the other hand is so subtle that it can easily seep into our lives from the system of the world in which we have to live and work in.

Proverbs 6:16–19
16 These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
17 A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,
18 A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil,
19 A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

There is mention of "a proud look." Pride is also an abomination to God and something that God hates.

James 4:6
But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

You cannot approach God in prayer with pride in your heart. God resists the proud. But you could argue saying, "God loves me, so how can He resist me?" He does love you but the pride that is in you is an abomination to Him. So, God avoids the proud and stays away from them.

Pride prevents God from drawing close to us. This is a dangerous position to be in, where God does not even want to come close. Therefore, every spiritual activity we might be involved in—worship, prayer, reading the Word, meditation, confession of the Word, fasting, and giving of money—becomes less effective if pride remains in our hearts. Spiritual activities are done from a desire to draw closer to God and He to us, but if we are unwilling to relinquish pride, God cannot draw close to us. Without God, we are nothing.

Whom does God give grace to? The Scriptures say that He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6b). Humility is a prerequisite for receiving divine grace in our lives. Everything we have and everything we will ever become is by the grace of God. In fact, everything we will become and accomplish beyond ourselves will only be by His grace. But if we walk with pride, we are cutting off the supply of divine grace in our lives and can neither become nor accomplish anything. Hence, we must first walk in humility, for only then will the grace of God be imparted into our lives.

Without humility, we will never become or accomplish God's highest and best for our lives. For example, holiness is a product of divine grace. All of us want to be holy but it is only the grace of God that can make us holy. However if we walk in pride, it stops the supply of divine grace and without His grace we cannot become holy. So one must be humble if one is to become holy. Humility ensures a constant supply of divine grace in our lives. God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud.

Great leaders are people of great humility. Often, we simply assume that these leaders are people who can wield power and influence. But the Bible says otherwise. Moses was probably one of the greatest leaders in the Old Testament. He led nearly six million people, or more, toward God's purposes for their lives, but Numbers 12:3 says, "*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth*." It emphasizes that Moses was the meekest man in all the earth although he may have had the chance to be the proudest man, because God had called him. Moses had a meek spirit and that is why God could use him.

Pride is a very subtle thing. It is easy to recognize the sins of the flesh and the sins of the eyes but difficult to recognize pride in us. **We think we are free from pride, when much of the way we think, the things we say, our attitudes, and behaviors are stained with pride.**

If we walk with pride, we cut off the supply of divine grace in our lives and can neither become nor accomplish anything. Hence, we must first walk in humility, for only then will the grace of God be imparted into our lives.

Manifestations Of Pride

When we are ill, our visits to a doctor enable him to look at our symptoms and come up with a diagnosis. Let us examine and see if we suffer from any or all the symptoms of the disease called pride.

Obstinate or Being Stubborn

There is a good kind of stubbornness—being steadfast or resolute about the call, purpose, and things of God. We must be "stubborn" for the right things. For example, be stubborn about holiness and do not compromise on it. When it comes to holiness, no one should be able to convince us otherwise. We must also be stubborn about the call of God on our lives and be unwavering. Yet we must guard ourselves from stubbornness and an unwillingness to change, both of which are birthed out of pride.

Daniel 5:17–21
17 Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.
18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.
19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down.
20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.
21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses."

Daniel tells us why God had to bring King Nebuchadnezzar down from his throne. He became proud, stubborn, and cruel. Stubbornness and cruelty go hand in hand, birthed from pride.

"*He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*" (Proverbs 29:1). When somebody repeatedly corrects us and we have the tendency to ignore that counsel, the Bible warns us that we will be destroyed. For instance, in a husband–wife relationship, when the wife comes up with ideas to do certain things and asks her husband's opinion on them, he may stubbornly shoot down every idea she puts forth, without any consideration. It may happen vice versa too. Often, the reason for their continual rejecting of each other's ideas could be the root of pride.

Another example would be in matters pertaining to the things of God. When people speak godly counsel and correction into our lives, we may be unwilling to listen, may harden ourselves, and prefer to let the correction go unheeded. Beware of such stubbornness that is usually born out of pride. It is good to be stubborn about the right things, though

more often we end up being stubborn about the wrong things. The root cause of this could be pride. The Bible says that the consequence of such an action will be sudden destruction without any remedy.

Arrogance or Overconfidence

Another manifestation of the spirit of pride is arrogance or overconfidence. Pride produces arrogance. For example, if Johnny turns 17 and tells his Dad, "Give me the car keys, I'm ready for the road." his Dad will probably say, "Johnny, you have to go to a driving school first, then get a learner's license before you drive on the roads on your own." But if Johnny insists, "Dad, I'm 17 and I do not need a learner's license. I am ready for the roads," then, it is arrogance or overconfidence. The root of that, many a time, is pride.

Arrogance makes us think that we know it all; that we do not need to listen to anybody's advice or counsel, and that we do not need to go through proper training or do whatever is necessary for us. "*We have heard the pride of Moab (He is exceedingly proud), of his loftiness and arrogance and pride, and of the haughtiness of his heart"* (Jeremiah 48:29). So what do we find with pride? We find loftiness and arrogance. *"I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible*" (Isaiah 13:11). So pride produces arrogance. The Bible teaches us that only a genuine fear of God will help us renounce pride, arrogance, and every evil way.

Proverbs 8:13
The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

Many of us in the Christian world have been taught to be spiritually aggressive. "*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matthew 11:12). However, we must be spiritually aggressive without being spiritually arrogant. Being forceful about the things of the Spirit is good, but the problem arises when we confuse spiritual arrogance with spiritual aggressiveness. In our attempts to be spiritually aggressive, we end up becoming spiritually arrogant. Spiritual arrogance makes us think that we are the best. For instance, we may think that we are in the best church and look down upon other churches. Spiritual arrogance makes us think that we are the ones who have everything just right and that everyone else is not as good as we are, and that our way of doing things is the best way. It makes us think that our brand of Christianity (if there is such a thing!) is the highest and absolute way. We must guard ourselves against this.

While we must stand for the truth of the Word, spiritual arrogance makes us think that we are the ones with the greatest personal revelation of the truth and that "we have got the ultimate deepest discovery, our way is the God-ordained way and any other way is

lower." It puts confidence in self and makes it important, promotes personal convictions, methods, styles, and preferences as absolutes and disregards the fact that "*there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all*" (1 Corinthians 12:6). We need to be extremely careful about this. There are diversities of operations. The same God who works in our churches, can work in any other church or setting. So, we cannot say our way is the only way.

I spend a lot of time preaching, and teaching the Word, but there are times when I listen to tapes, read books, watch, and listen to other ministers preaching on television. During such times, I sit like a student. I may have preached many sermons; but when someone else is speaking, whether 10 years younger or 50 years older, I listen because God could be using that person to speak to me. But spiritual arrogance can keep one from listening to the minister who may be younger in years. Let us remember that Scripture has recorded that God spoke even through a donkey!

Rebellion

Rebelliousness is a manifestation of the root of pride. It is the unwillingness to submit to God-appointed authority, given to us through His Word, His Spirit, and His people. For example, parents are the God-appointed authority in our lives irrespective of whether we like it or not. Pride causes one to walk in rebellion toward God-appointed authority.

Partial obedience is also considered rebellion! Many of us obey God partly. God spoke to Saul and gave him specific instructions to destroy the Amalekites and make sure he destroyed everything (1 Samuel 15). But Saul obeyed only part of the command. He destroyed in part and kept the king and some of the animals alive. When Samuel asked Saul why he did such a thing, Saul replied that he was thinking of offering the remains to the Lord. Samuel says, "*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king*" (1 Samuel 15:23). Saul's fault was partial obedience. Some of us tell God, "I will give you my offerings Lord, but do not ask for my tithe." Remember partial obedience is still rebellion!

Lucifer's was the greatest act of rebellion, stemming from pride. In Isaiah 14:12–15, we read about Lucifer's fall. "*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit*." That was the greatest act of rebellion known in history, birthed in pride.

Sometimes as young people growing up, we tend to feel that we know more than our

parents. We feel that we are the ones who are trendy, current, and in touch with the latest and greatest in the world. We feel our parents are rather outdated and disconnected. So, we continuously rebel against their instructions and advice. This puts us in a dangerous place of rebellion. The secret to blessing in life is found in Ephesians 6:1–3: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth*." " We seem to need God when it is time to write our exams, during college admissions, for our job pursuits, for good health, and blessings of long life. We want it to go well with us but God says that if we want it to go well with us, we ought to honor our father and mother. This is the first commandment that has a promise tagged to it. If you keep it, "*that it will go well with you and you will live long on the earth*" says God. We must honor our parents and give them the respect that is due to them.

Having said that, the Bible does say that we must obey parents "in the Lord." So, in situations where parents ask us to do things contrary to the Word of God, we have the right to stand up for the Word.

When I was young, I attended the Methodist Church's Vacation Bible School (VBS) where we were encouraged to work at home to earn some money to give to the Lord as an offering. So, I decided to polish my Dad's shoes and earn the money. After VBS was over, I realized that this was indeed a good way to earn money and so I continued to polish my Dad's shoes, kept an account, and got paid for it at the end of every month. In addition to this, I also ironed his clothes every morning, right from my seventh grade up to the twelfth, without "charging" him for it. It was a work of honor and respect, and thus I feel I participated in his success in life. Some mornings I did not feel like doing it, but I reminded myself of God's command that if I honor my father and mother, it will go well with me. I wanted to have a good life and so I told God, "I'm obeying your Word, so it will go well with me now." If we honor in simple practical ways, God-appointed authority at home, in our workplaces, and in the House of the Lord, we will receive a blessing on our lives.

Being Scornful

The fourth manifestation of the root of pride is being scornful. To be scornful is to be mocking, disrespectful, sneering, and contemptuous of others. This is usually shown in the comments one makes and the opinions one has about other people. There are some who rarely have anything good to say about others. They always speak low and derogatorily of others. This is being scornful and is usually birthed out of pride.

The Bible talks about how scorners take pleasure in scorning people. "*For scorners delight in their scorning"* (Proverbs 1:22b). "*Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the*

humble" (Proverbs 3:34). It is a warning that God scorns the scorners! "*A proud and haughty man—"Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride*" (Proverbs 21:24).

We are warned that being scornful produces trouble—"*Scoffers set a city aflame, but wise men turn away wrath*" (Proverbs 29:8).

Self-Righteousness/Hypocrisy

Consider the contrast in the prayer of the Pharisee and tax collector.

Luke 18:9–14
9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.
12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'
13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'
14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Sometimes, we believe we are righteous and despise others. Pride produces self-righteousness that leads to hypocrisy. Self-righteousness makes us judge others and makes us think we are better than others without recognizing the flaws that we have in ourselves. A hypocrite is one who excuses his own sin while condemning the sins of others. For example, you may ask someone else why he or she did not read the Bible that day, making them feel guilty, whereas if you were to ask yourself the same question, you would find a very good reason to excuse yourself for not having read the Bible.

Matthew 7:1–5
1 Judge not, that you be not judged.
2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.
3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?
4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?
5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

We need to get rid of the sin of judging others because it keeps us from discerning sin in ourselves. Some of us specialize in finding faults in other people, while being slow to recognize the "plank" that is in our own lives. We do not become holy by judging others; neither do we draw nearer to God by finding fault in others. This kind of "fault-finding ministry" will not draw us close to God! Evaluation is good but we need to be careful

before we pass judgment on our fellow brothers and sisters in the House of the Lord. Christ died for sinners before He ascended to the throne where He one day will be our Judge. In God's Kingdom, unless we are first committed to laying down our lives for people, we are not given the authority to be their leader or judge. So, before we judge people, we must ask ourselves if we are willing to die for them, to bring them out of where they are, to a place of wholeness! When we speak against sin, injustice, and unrighteousness, we must be motivated by the love of God with the sole objective of restoration and wholeness. If that is not our motivation or our goal, then we must learn to be quiet!

Contentiousness or Being Quarrelsome

Sometimes, we are so contentious and quarrelsome that it may have its root cause in pride. "*By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom*" (Proverbs 13:10). "*He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered*" (Proverbs 28:25). Thus, pride produces strife.

Prejudice

Pride also births prejudice. Prejudice is discrimination, bias, intolerance, and predisposed unfairness toward certain kinds of people. All of us, at some point in life, suffer from showing some sort of prejudice toward people. It could be the rich–poor divide where you may feel friendlier toward a rich person than a poor one or we could be prejudiced against people based on their educational qualifications. We may also make generalizations depending on which part of the country people are from, the color of their skin, gender, and sometimes even based on church denominations.

We are warned against this kind of prejudice: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28). We are all God's people and it is important to learn how to treat everyone equally, by getting rid of our prejudices that are birthed in pride.

Being High-Minded and Exclusive

Sometimes though we have our feet on the ground, our heads tend to be somewhere up in the sky. Most of us suffer from this common malady. Apostle Paul says, "*Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion*" (Romans 12:16). We are so high-minded that we cannot connect with people. We may have "space-age education," but may not be able to hold a simple conversation with the person who sweeps our floors. Our wealth may also make us high-minded and lead us to believe that we belong to a certain class of

people. Even our talents and capabilities, personal qualifications can make us believe that we indeed are a class of our own. "*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy*" (1 Timothy 6:17). Let us not set our minds on high things but learn to associate with the humble. We need to be people who can connect with anyone and not be wise in our own opinion.

Consequences Of A Heart Of Pride

Brings Shame

Shame accompanies pride. "*When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom*" (Proverbs 11:2).

Results in Fall and Destruction

Proverbs 16:18
Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Mark 7:14–23
14 When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand:
15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.
16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"
17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.
18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him,
19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"
20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.
21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.
23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Jesus listed pride as one of those things that springs up from within and defiles the man. It is destructive and can lead one to fall.

Produces Self-Deception

Pride can deceive us. "*The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground*?'" (Obadiah 1:3). "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21).

A heart of meekness is a prerequisite for receiving the Word—for the Word to become an experiential reality in our lives and be engrafted in us. But pride prevents us from receiving the Word and leads us into deception. Deception is having a lot of knowledge of the Word but not allowing the Word to transform our lives. Revelation that does not lead to transformation is likely to lead one to deception, because we may think we have become "possessors" while actually we are only "knowers." Knowing and possessing are entirely two different things. There is a difference between having spiritual head-knowledge and having the Word become flesh—when the Word becomes an experiential reality in our lives. Just having deep spiritual knowledge, without making it an experiential reality, makes one proud.

The Bible says, "*Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*" (1 Corinthians 8:1). But, if we maintain a meek heart, it will make the Word a reality in us, rather than just knowledge. Satan's lies enter our minds in quiet whispers, not in flamboyant shouts. He walks in darkness not in light. Although he pretends to be an angel of light, he does not shout from the rooftops, "Here I am, bringing deception into your lives." But rather, that deception which comes in quiet whispers, slowly seeps into our minds, deceives us, and covers the truth.

Brings Condemnation

The most serious consequence of pride at work in our lives is that it brings the condemnation and judgment of God upon our lives. Paul instructs Timothy as to who should be appointed leaders in the House of the Lord: "*not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil*" (1 Timothy 3:6).

Pride brings the same judgment and condemnation as that which came on satan when he rebelled, was condemned, and cast out ofGod's presence.

Whether young or old, we need to examine our hearts, deal with the root of pride in our lives, and get rid of it. Let our prayers be, "*Lord Jesus, lay the axe to the root of pride in my life*."

Maintaining A Meek And Humble Spirit

We Are Called to Be Meek

Meekness, humility, and lowliness are Christian virtues. We must fulfill the vocation to which we are called, with meekness and lowliness. The Scripture instructs that ministers of God must minister with a spirit of meekness.

Ephesians 4:2
With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.

Colossians 3:12
Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.

2 Timothy 2:25
In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.

Understand That Meekness Is True Strength

Meekness is not weakness—a fact that is emphasized in the Scripture passage below.

Matthew 11:22–29
22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.
23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.
25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.
26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.
27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.
28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Jesus described Himself as meek and lowly in heart. Beware when someone speaks with contempt about being "meek and lowly" in heart. This is contrary to the very nature and character of Christ! Meekness is a virtue of the risen Christ and is produced in us by His Spirit.

Galatians 5:22
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5). Therefore, meekness is not weakness but strength. The key to great conquests is a spirit of meekness because it is the meek who will inherit the earth. If we want to be great conquerors for the Kingdom of God, we must have a spirit of meekness.

Always Maintain a Servant Heart

In whatever you do, always check your heart, and say, "Lord, I want to have a servant

heart."

Matthew 23:10–12
10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.
11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.
12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The Emphasis Is on Humbling Oneself

Philippians 2:5–11
5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Always Maintain a True Estimation of Yourself

Romans 12:3
For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Galatians 6:1
Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Humility Is Walking in Utter Dependence on the Lord at all Times

James 4:6–10
6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

True humility is more than an awareness of our weaknesses and the condition of our needs. When everything is going well with us, and we are flourishing and being used by God mightily, we need to remember and say, "God, it is all because of You!" Even in times of great blessing, strength, and victory, we must recognize and delight in our utter dependence on the Lord, knowing that every good thing we have, has come from Him. This is true humility.

2 Corinthians 3:5
Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.

Submission and Repentance Are Key

We need to admit to the possibility of having pride in our hearts and constantly examine our hearts, thoughts, attitudes, and actions. We must get rid of the assumption that we are free from pride.

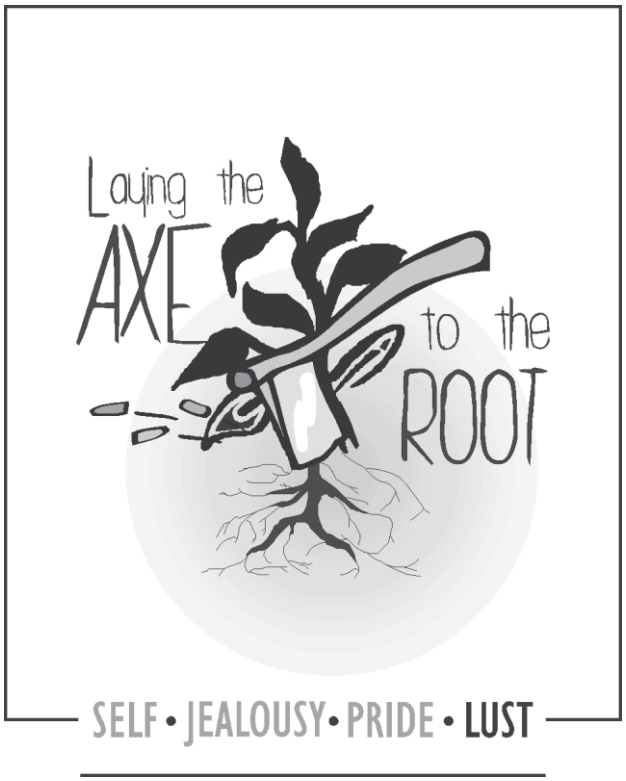
James 4:7–10
7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

We need to continually evaluate ourselves in the presence of the Lord, submit to Him, repent, clean our hands, and purify our hearts. We must continually ask the Lord to search our hearts and expose pride in our lives, by His Spirit. For the humble shall be honored.

Proverbs 29:23
A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Prayer

Father, I come before You and ask You to help me maintain a humble heart. Father God help me renounce pride, in every part of me, and enable me to always walk in humility before You, in a spirit of meekness and lowliness. Father, no matter what You may do in me and through me, I just want to be humble before You. That is my desire. Lord Jesus, lay the axe to the root of pride in me!


Laying the
AXE
to the
ROOT
SELF • JEALOUSY • PRIDE • LUST

4. Laying The Axe To The Root Of Lust

Having discovered how to lay the axe to the roots of self, jealousy, and pride, we will now deal with the root of lust in our lives. What is lust? Lust is any uncontrollable, unreasonable, excessive, immoderate desire—a passion, longing, yearning, and craving for something. The Bible defines lust as "covetousness or inordinate affection." Lust is the way of the world, the way the world operates or walks in. It fills the world.

Ephesians 2:1–3
1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

The way of the world is to fulfill the desires of the flesh and the mind—if it feels good or makes you happy—just do it! We were once a part of this world's system that is dominated by lust. We walked according to it, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind. But because of Jesus, we no longer must be of the world, dominated by lust.

2 Peter 1: 4
By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

There is corruption or moral decay in the world because of lust. But the good news is that God has given us exceedingly great and precious promises in His Word, by which we can escape the corruption in the world. We do not have to be caught in the same trap of corruption. We can escape it. Amen! Desire is not wrong. In fact, we must have good and healthy desires. If we do not have a desire, we will not be motivated and we might just drift through life. The Bible says that we should desire for more of God—His presence, His power, and His Word.

Psalm 37:4
Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 10:24
The fear of the wicked will come upon him, And the desire of the righteous will be granted.

Mark 11:24
Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Before we pray, we need to have a desire for good and right things. The problem arises when there is a desire for wrong things that becomes uncontrolled and excessive.

James 1:13–16
13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God;" for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.
14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.
15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when full-grown, brings forth death.
16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Temptation is the drawing away by our own desires, because of our lusts. It is not the devil's desire or our neighbors' desires but our desires that are at work and trying to draw us and entice us, thereby weakening our wills to resist it. Temptation occurs when a desire for something wrong is stirred up within us and weakens our wills to refuse that desire. The stirring up of wrong desires could take place because we do not guard our thoughts, reasoning, imaginations, and the information we expose ourselves to. It could take place through the influence of other people. Or it could come through suggestive thoughts, ideas, and imaginations that demons introduce into our minds. Our desires draw us away. **We need to learn to bring those desires under subjection and keep them under control.** The devil CANNOT make us sin. He presents suggestive thoughts that stir up our desires and if those desires are not controlled, they can weaken our wills to resist temptations.

1 John 2:16-17
16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.
17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

In the Scripture passage above, three things are mentioned—the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. The world is gripped by the lusts of the eyes and flesh. By "lust of the flesh," we mean things that gratify the sinful desires of the body. The lust of the eyes gratifies what we see and what we want, without necessarily possessing that "thing."

How do we identify the manifestations of the root of lust?

The Lust Of The Flesh

Uncontrollable Desire for Substances, Including Good Food

Every time we point an accusing finger at the person who drinks alcohol, smokes cigarettes, or abuses drugs, we forget the person who desires good food. It amounts to the same thing!

1 Corinthians 6:12-13
12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

All things are lawful for me but I will not be brought under the power of any. It is acceptable to sometimes indulge in your favorite food, but if you are under its control, then it is wrong. "*Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them"* (1 Corinthians 6:13a).

Paul writes about those whose God is their belly: "*Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things"* (Philippians 3:19). Their appetites dominate and control them. This is the lust of the flesh, with an uncontrollable desire for a substance—even good food. In the Old Testament, we read that God's people had just come out of Egypt, been delivered out of slavery, crossed the Red Sea, and were on their way to the land of abundance, where God promised it would flow with milk and honey. And suddenly they had an uncontrollable craving to eat meat. This desire was so intense that it became a lust for meat.

Numbers 11:4–6
4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat?
5 We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;
6 but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"

While being in the center of fulfilling a glorious plan and divine purpose, the people of Israel went lusting for good food. Their intense craving to satisfy their bodily appetites took precedence and became more important than fulfilling the plan and purpose of God. I wonder how many times we have given precedence to food that we want to eat, instead of spending some time in fasting and prayer!

The Israelites ended up tempting God. The Bible tells us not to tempt (test) the Lord our God.

Psalm 78:14–32
14 In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.
15 He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths.
16 He also brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.
17 But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy.
19 Yes, they spoke against God: they said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?"
21 Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel,
22 because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.
23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven,
24 had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven.
25 Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind.
27 He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;
28 and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings.
29 So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own desire.
30 They were not deprived of their craving; but while their food was still in their mouths,
31 the wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel.
32 In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works.

Another parallel passage is:

Psalm 106:9–15
9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.
10 He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left.
12 Then they believed His words; they sang His praise.
13 They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel,
14 but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert.
15 And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.

When there is an uncontrollable desire for substances like alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs, we call it "addiction." When there is an uncontrollable desire for good food, we call it "gluttony." Both are lusts of the flesh and Jesus came to lay the axe to the roots of these.

This is what Narcotics Anonymous, in their book about addiction, in the chapter on "Who is an addict?" have to say: "*Most of us do not have to think twice about this question, WE KNOW! Our whole life and thinking was centered on drugs in one form or another—the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails,*

institutions and death." It continues about how an addict thinks. It says*, "Many of us did not think that we had a problem with drugs until the drugs ran out. Even when others told us that we had a problem, we were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong. We used this belief to justify our self-destructive behavior.*"

People who have such uncontrollable desires for substances usually never admit there is a problem. When people tell them that there is a problem, they think that the others are out to steal their joy. We use this reason to justify what really is a bondage or lust.

Compulsive Habits or Desires

Another manifestation of lust would be compulsive habits or desires. Habits like more sleep than we need. For example, if you are sleeping 12 hours a day, when 8 hours is what you need, the extra 4 hours would be part of the addiction. Or if you feel it is necessary to watch a movie every week or month—that is a compulsive habit or desire. Another example would be in compulsive shopping. If you think you must go shopping every week or else feel something is wrong and life cannot go on, that is a compulsive habit, desire, and lust of the flesh. If you must have certain luxuries or think you must receive gifts from your spouse, that it becomes a compulsive habit or desire, then it is a lust of the flesh. Whatever controls us and holds us in bondage, as a slave, is an addiction.

Proverbs 5:22
His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin.

Our sins trap us and hold us as slaves. Jesus said that whoever committed sin was a slave to it.

John 8:34
Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

2 Peter 2:19
While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

What overcomes us holds us in bondage. We will have to admit then that there is lust there.

Sexual Perversion

The third manifestation is sexual perversion. Our sexuality was designed and created by God. The way God designed sex is pure before Him. It is holy and there is nothing wrong with the way it has been designed and created, within marriage. However, unnatural sexual acts and forms of sexual pleasure that God did not design are unacceptable before

God. There are many Christians who are in bondage to the lusts of the flesh in areas of their sexuality. Romans 1:18–32 talks about the wrath of God.

Romans 1:18–32
18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.
20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,
21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.
24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,
25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.
28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,
30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Bible clearly warns that homosexuality is wrong. There is a western thought where people think God may have created homosexuals. This is slowly filtering into our country. God did not create any of us as homosexuals. It is a perversion and against the law of God. It is unnatural, it is not the way God designed our sexuality. It is sin and we cannot condone it. We cannot say homosexuality is acceptable when it is not acceptable in the sight of God. Romans 1:28, says that when they did not choose to "*retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up over to a debased mind*." When people insist on having their own ways, pursuing unnatural desires, God steps away, and the person's mind becomes reprobate (unapproved, rejected, worthless, and good-for-nothing).

When people's minds become reprobate, they become so darkened in their thinking process that they believe that their unnatural lifestyles are normal. For example, homosexuals think that this is the way they have been made, whereas the Bible calls it sin! When someone wants to pursue his or her own ideas and thoughts, the Bible says that God steps aside and says, "You want to do it, carry on. If you want to have your own

way, have it." Sexual perversion, immorality, pre-marital sex, sex outside marriage, adultery, homosexuality, and incest are unacceptable before God.

Then there are other forms of sexual perversion, like fantasizing sexual experiences. You may not be physically committing the act, but you may be sitting in your own room fantasizing all kinds of things. This is sexual perversion. It is the lust of the flesh and is unacceptable before God. Using things to give you sexual pleasure even when you are not physically having sex with your spouse is also sexual perversion. Being in bondage to masturbation (habitual masturbation) is another example of sexual perversion and a lust of the flesh. It may be holding you and you need to be set free. God wants to deal with these issues in your lives.

Lust Of The Eyes

Pornography

"*Abstain from every form of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Many believers get entrapped in pornography because such material has crept right into our homes. Even our morning newspapers have advertisements and columns with scantily clad women! Newspapers no longer just carry the news but pictures of scantily clad women, in almost every page. It is hard to just read the news without looking at these pictures. Today such images flood almost every place that we look, through billboards, posters, the Internet, and so on. Many are thus entrapped in pornography, and we need to guard ourselves against it because pornography is the lust of the eyes.

Filthy Thoughts and Immoral Fantasies

People may indulge in filthy thoughts and immoral fantasies. Filthy thoughts and fantasies are part of the lust of the eyes. The Bible encourages us to think on things that are pure and clean:

Philippians 4:8
Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Fascination Toward Good-looking Men and Women

This hits closer to home for all of us and is a lust of the eyes. Some people cannot keep their heads straight. Their heads turn every time a good-looking person passes by. Jesus said, "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matthew 5:28).

Covetousness

Covetousness desires what somebody else has. The Bible warns that covetousness is idolatry. We always want to point a finger at the one who bows down to a picture, idol, or statue not realizing that covetousness in the heart is idolatry. If you have an intense desire for what someone else has, that is covetousness. It is idolatry.

Jeremiah 6:13
Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.

Colossians 3:5
Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Covetousness is a form of idolatry because it allows a desire for something to take precedence over our desire for God. An idol is whatever comes between God and us, and the relationship that we are to maintain with God, in spirit and in truth. It could be physical objects like a picture or a statue, or it could be a "soulish" affection for something. God considers this a form of spiritual adultery. Whatever takes God's place in my life is an idol and it may be a person, food, sex, career, sports, religion, or even a form of worship.

God says, "*You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's*" (Exodus 20:17). If I look at something that someone else has and say, "I must have it," that is covetousness. Jesus warns us to beware of covetousness: "*And He said to them*, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*" (Luke 12:15).

Desire for Money, Power, Fame, Position, and Influence

Money, power, fame, position, and influence in themselves are just tools for us to use. But an inordinate affection or an uncontrollable desire for these kinds of things is lust. This was the exact kind of temptation that satan brought to Eve in the Garden of Eden. "*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate*" (Genesis 3:6). There was a three-fold temptation: the lust of the eyes ("pleasing to the eyes"), the lust of the flesh ("good for food"), and the pride of life ("make one wise"). So, we must guard ourselves from an intense desire for these kinds of things.

Worldliness

An attraction or fascination for the things of the world makes us an enemy with God. It is another area of the lust of the eyes and flesh.

James 4:1–4
1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?
2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.
3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.
4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Whoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. I am not saying that we should not desire for anything at all, in this world. Of course, we need a vehicle, a home to live in, and so on. There is nothing wrong in enjoying the things God has given us (1 Timothy 6:17), but if our desire for the things of this world becomes an uncontrolled desire, then we are "in love with this world," and cannot be a friend of God.

Greed

Greed is the intense desire for more. "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (1 Timothy 6:10). Money, in itself, is not wrong. But the love of it and craving for it, is wrong. God's will is to bless and prosper His people. No question about it! But in our desire for the blessings of God, many have strayed into the dangerous area of lust. This has become so pervasive in the Church. We claim a bigger car, a bigger house, more wealth, greater success, a wider ministry, greater recognition, higher position in life, and so on, in the pretext that we are claiming the blessings of God. In the process of pursuing "more," "bigger," and "better," we have unknowingly developed an inordinate affection for such things. The desire for these has become uncontrollable and excessive. We have departed from a godly pursuit and healthy desire and have arrived at a place of lust. This is dangerous! We must come back to a place where we know that "*godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Timothy 6:6).

We must pursue the high call of God, the great dreams, and the noble purposes of God without developing an affection for tools like money, influence, power, position—things that we use to accomplish those purposes. There is nothing wrong with money. In fact, we do need money. We pray and believe God for a lot of money but money is not our goal. It is just a tool to pay the bills, so that we can preach the Gospel and get souls saved and build the Kingdom of God.

But what has happened in the Body of Christ is that in the desire to pursue the blessings of God, we have entered areas of covetousness, greed, and lust. We have gone after things and forgotten the call of God and the dreams that God has given to us. "Things" are just His tools that we use to pursue the call of God.

Youthful Lusts

The Bible warns us to *"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"* (2 Timothy 2:22). When it comes to the lusts that the youth are trapped in, there is a long list. Let us take for example, ungodly music. Many varieties or types of modern music are addictive and destructive in their content. They do not edify and yet some young people may say, "I have to listen to it. I cannot get my day started unless I have my coffee and that music on." That is a youthful lust. If it is a must, then it is a lust. Addiction to music, television, movies, Xbox, play station, Internet, and chat rooms are all part of our modern-day youthful lusts. There is nothing wrong with these things as such. But if you are addicted to them, there is a youthful lust that is holding you. If spending an hour in the chat room or browsing on the Internet becomes a must for your day to be complete, then it is a youthful lust. A word of caution to young people who are not sure if what they are doing is right or wrong—When in doubt, cast it out! Why take a chance? Do not even deal with such things. Flee from all appearance of evil. *"Abstain from all forms of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Consequences Of The Root Of Lust

There are many consequences of having roots of lust in our lives. Listed below are a few:

Lust Chokes the Word

If people allow lust to continue, be it lust of the eyes or flesh; it is going to negate the effect of God's Word in their lives. In Mark 4:19, Jesus said, "*And the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful*." You can sit in church, hear the Word of God year in and year out, without producing any fruit. The Bible says that the lust for other things in the world can choke the Word and negate what it is doing in you.

Lust Brings Bondage

We lose our freedom and become slaves to the things that we are lusting after. Paul wrote in Romans 6:12, *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." You are a servant to what you obey. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of*

sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

Lust Brings Destruction to Our Souls and Bodies

Fleshly lusts war against our souls, minds, wills, and emotions. "*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*" (1 Peter 2:11). If you are indulging in sexual perversion and you say, "I cannot concentrate," and your mind keeps wandering while doing something else, it is the fleshly lust that is allowed to continue in your lives, that is causing this. Lust wars against our minds, wills, and emotions and weakens our souls, our capacities to concentrate, our abilities to remember, and the intellect that God has given us. It is also destructive to the body. "*Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). You are sinning and violating your own body when you are involved in sexual immorality.

A Deeper Look At The Problem Of Lust

At the beginning of this chapter, I said that we are tempted when we are drawn of our own desires and our own lusts. But sometimes, the problem may lie a little deeper than the surface and may be because of various other reasons.

A Wounded Spirit

A wounded spirit can drive people into excessive indulgences. People who are emotionally hurt or devastated—maybe they lost a loved one, went through a divorce, had a financial problem, faced bankruptcy, or something terrible had happened in their lives—may be driven to excessive indulgences. In situations like that, we must first deal with the root cause and bring healing to the inner wound of that person. People may become alcoholics after losing a job, or a dear friend whom they were counting on may have left them. Maybe it was their spouse—and so they were hurt emotionally. This could have pushed them over the edge and into an excessive indulgence—alcohol, cigarettes, or immorality. We need to address the root of the problem first. *"The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?"* (Proverbs 18:14) A wounded spirit—not a physical wound but something deep inside— must be healed.

Some Lusts Are Demonically Energized

The Scripture reveals that there are different kinds of demonic spirits that energize sinful behavior patterns. Some lusts are demonically energized. We talk about demons not to scare you but to equip you. In addition to your own desires, things may have reached a stage where there are demons that are energizing and making it such a strong bondage in your lives. The Bible talks about several kinds of demonic spirits.

There Are Unclean Spirits that Produce Immoral Lifestyles

Matthew 12:43
When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.

There are perverse spirits that produce all kinds of perversion or violation against the way God intended things or people to be.

Isaiah 19:14
The Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; and they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

This verse seems to indicate that God was the One who sent a perverse spirit. However, from looking at the entire Scripture, we know that God does not need the help of perverse spirits to accomplish His will on the earth. The correct interpretation to this verse is that when God saw the continual sin of the people (in this case, Egypt), He withdrew His divine protection. This gave perverse spirits that were attracted by the sins of the people, an entrance into their lives thereby holding them in bondage.

There Are Spirits of Whoredom or Harlotry

Hosea 4:12
My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God.

Hosea 5:4
They do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the Lord.

Spirits of whoredom or harlotry cause people to go astray from God and pursue other things, thus making them commit spiritual adultery.

There Is a Spirit of Bondage that Produces Bondage to Sin, Compulsive Habits and Addictions

Romans 8:15
For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

There Is a Spirit of Disobedience, Which Causes Disobedience and Rebellion Against the Truth

Ephesians 2:2
In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

There Is a Spirit of this World that Brings Conformance to Worldliness.

1 Corinthians 2:12
Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

There Are Seducing Spirits that Cause People to be Entrapped and Fascinated by the Things of this World

1 Timothy 4:1
Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

2 Timothy 3:13
But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

So there are different kinds of demonic spirits that are operating in the world around us. The sad thing is that it is possible for believers to give entrance to these kinds of spirits into their lives.

A Believer Can Have Strongholds

There can be strongholds in a born-again, tongue-talking, church-going believer's life—areas in the soul that are occupied and controlled by demonic spirits. Paul talks about strongholds: "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled*" (2 Corinthians 10:4–6).

The reprobate mind is a stronghold of satan—a mind that considers evil as good and good as evil. A mind given to worldliness is satan's foothold in a believer's life—the areas of our thought lives that we keep in darkness without bringing into light. Those areas where we embrace lies instead of submitting to the truth of God's Word are the very areas that satan has us bound in. I was talking to a person who abused drugs sometime back and I asked him, "Why do you do this?" and he replied, "I'm not doing anything wrong. I'm not hurting you, so why are you saying that it is wrong?" That is logical thinking, but nevertheless a stronghold. He thinks, "As long as I am not hurting anybody else, it is ok to do drugs."

What are strongholds? **Strongholds are thought patterns in our minds where we have become tolerant to sin, where we have compromised, and rejected the truth with a lie, thus giving satan a place of influence and a place of defense in our minds**. "As long as pastor does not see it, it is ok for me," you may think. So, you think nothing of the wrong

things that you do during the week and have no guilt in singing "Hallelujah" on Sunday mornings! This is a stronghold, a thought pattern that makes us think it is fine and makes us tolerant toward sin. We give satan a place of influence in our lives. Through these strongholds, sinful activities are defended within us, because of the thought patterns that we have embraced or allowed in our minds. It is true that a Christian cannot be possessed by demons because the Holy Spirit already dwells in our spirits. However, a Christian can be in bondage, be oppressed, harassed, and have areas of his mind or body occupied by demonic spirits—when he gives entrance to them through consistent wrong thoughts and behaviors. For example, if you consistently indulge in pornography, the occasional once-in-a-month-kind of thing can become a regular weekly habit and soon you find that you cannot do without it. What has happened? That area of your soul has been occupied by an unclean spirit, which is causing uncontrolled immoral behavior in your lives. So now it is no longer an occasional habit—it is bondage and a stronghold. Areas of habitual sin, uncontrollable lust, compulsive behaviors are most likely areas that are demonically energized. Sinful habits become the dwelling place of a corresponding demon spirit that has become satan's stronghold in a believer's life and holds that person in bondage.

In saying this, we are not attempting to condone ourselves and blame the devil for every sinful behavior. Do not say, "The devil is making me do it." You opened the door and allowed entry to the enemy. You are responsible and therefore do not blame the devil for it. We must understand the seriousness of an immoral lifestyle. When a person continues in immoral behavior, he gives entrance to the enemy to occupy a place in his mind, affections, and body. So we need to guard ourselves against giving entrance to the enemy in our lives.

How Are We To Break The Power Of Lust?

Receive the Truth

Say, "Yes I want to receive the truth." What is the truth?

1 Corinthians 3:15-16
15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

The body is meant to be holy. It is supposed to be free of the lust of the eyes and flesh. Nothing immoral or unclean should be in our bodies and minds. Our bodies were not designed for sexual immorality.

1 Corinthians 6:13–20
13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.
15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and

make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!
16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."
17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.
18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.
19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

God's will for us is to be holy.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–5
3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;
4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

We Need to Confess, Repent and Renounce

We must shut the doors that we may have opened to satan. It is easy to repent in church, shed tears, wipe them away, and walk out the door, straight back to the same things that we need to break free from. Then our repentance becomes of no use.

Make No Provision for the Flesh

Romans 13:14
But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Once you have repented, make sure you have closed every door. Do not give satan any opportunity in your lives. If the morning's newspaper is causing you to get into pornography, stop your subscription to that newspaper. You may say, "But I want to catch up with the news." It is ok to be ignorant and get to heaven, than to know everything that is in the world and be in hell. If your cable TV is causing you to spend hours on the couch, stop your subscription. You say you need it for the news, but if you end up watching everything else, it is better to get to heaven without a cable TV subscription. Jesus said, "*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off, if your eyes causes you to sin, pluck it out…*" (Mathew 5:29-30). He was not talking about literal physical things, but of those things that causes us to sin. There must be a severe "cutting off" from these things. Make no provision for the flesh. Do not give the enemy an opportunity to enter again once you have repented. Or you will end up in a state, seven times worse than before. (Do not repent if you cannot be serious about it.)

Do Some Practical Things

Understand that there are some areas where you need the help, support, and strength

of godly people to overcome. There is nothing wrong in recognizing this need and surrounding yourself with the right people, to live victoriously. We need each other. This is one reason why we have cell groups in our church**.** Some more practical things that you can do are as follows:

Refuse to Lust After Women or Men.

Proverbs 6:25
Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids.

Be Content with What You Have

Hebrews 13:5
Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.

1 Timothy 6:6
Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

Deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts. Live Sober, Righteous, and Godly Lives

Titus 2:12
Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

Walk in the Spirit and You will not Fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh.

Galatians 5:16-17,24
16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Incline Your Heart to God's Word and You Will Get Rid of Covetousness.

Psalm 119:36
Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.

Satan fears a godly life—a life that is totally yielded to God in holiness and purity. He is not fearful of someone who is very anointed and gifted, so long as they have areas of pet sins. In fact, he delights in such because he can now strategically "knock them down" maximizing the devastation their fall will bring to Christians all around. However, satan finds a godly life impregnable—a defense he cannot penetrate.

Prayer, Confession, Repentance, And Renunciation

Heavenly Father I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ. I confess that I have maintained areas in my life that I have not fully surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ—areas of self, areas of jealousy, areas of pride, areas of lust, and tolerance toward sin. Today, in the name of Jesus, I ask you to forgive me and cleanse me with the precious blood of Jesus.

(Name, confess, and repent of specific habitual sins, behavior patterns, addictions, before the Lord).

By the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, I bind every influence of the devil over my life. I reject spirits of uncleanness and spirits of perversion and give them no place in my life. I reject spirits of harlotry and refuse to go astray from the Lord God of my life. I pledge total and complete allegiance to Jesus Christ. I refuse to pursue anything that takes God's place in my life. I renounce and tear down every form of idolatry. I refuse to allow any imitation of the true and living God—but choose to worship Him in spirit and truth alone.

I reject the spirit of bondage. In Jesus' name, by the blood of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit I break every bondage to sin in my life. I destroy every compulsive habit, uncontrollable desire, and addiction. In Jesus' name I am free, for Christ has set me free!

I reject the spirit of disobedience and refuse disobedience and rebellion against the truth. I receive the truth and submit myself to the truth of God's Word. I reject the spirit of this world and refuse to be conformed to this world. By the help of the Holy Spirit, I choose to conform myself to the Word of God. I reject the influence of seducing spirits and refuse to yield to the attractions of this world.

By the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God I declare every stronghold destroyed and removed by its foundations from my life. I allow the Lord Jesus to establish His truth and righteousness in the very areas where these strongholds existed. God's Word, His presence, and His truth will be the only strongholds in my life. The Holy Spirit guides me into all truth, purity, and holiness. In Jesus Name. Amen!

Partner with All Peoples Church

All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of books are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

We invite you to partner with us financially by sending either a one-time gift or a monthly financial gift. Any amount that you can send to help us in this work across our nation will be greatly appreciated.

You can send your gift by cheque / bank draft payable to "All Peoples Church" to our office address. Else you can remit your contribution directly by bank transfer using our bank account details.

Account Name: All Peoples Church
Account Number: 0057213809
IFSC Code: CITI0000004
Bank: Citibank N.A., No. 5, M.G. Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001

Kindly note: All Peoples Church can only accept bank contributions from an India based bank account. When making your contribution, if desired, you can indicate the specific APC ministry area where you would like your contribution to be used. For additional details please visit ***apcwo.org/give***

Also, please remember to pray for us and our ministry whenever you can.

Thank You and God Bless!

FREE PUBLICATIONS

A Church in Revival*
A Real Place Called Heaven
A Time for Every Purpose
Ancient Landmarks*
Baptism in the Holy Spirit
Being Spiritually Minded and Earthly Wise
Biblical Attitude Towards Work
Breaking Personal and Generational Bondages
Change*
Code of Honor
Divine Favor*
Divine Order in the Citywide Church
Don't Compromise Your Calling*
Don't Lose Hope
Equipping the Saints
Foundations (Track 1)
Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life
Gifts of the Holy Spirit
Giving Birth to the Purposes of God*
God Is a Good God
God's Word—The Miracle Seed
How to Help Your Pastor
Integrity
Kingdom Builders
Laying the Axe to the Root
Living Life Without Strife*
Marriage and Family
Ministering Healing and Deliverance
Offenses—Don't Take Them
Open Heavens*
Our Redemption
Receiving God's Guidance
Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God
Shhh! No Gossip!
Speak Your Faith *
The Conquest of the Mind
The Father's Love
The House of God
The Kingdom of God
The Mighty Name of Jesus *
The Night Seasons of Life
The Power of Commitment*
The Presence of God
The Redemptive Heart of God
The Refiner's Fire
The Spirit of Wisdom, Revelation and Power*
The Wonderful Benefits of speaking in Tongues
Timeless Principles for the Workplace
Understanding the Prophetic
Water Baptism
We Are Different*
Who We Are in Christ
Women in the Workplace
Work Its Original Design

PDF versions of all the above books are available for free download from our church website at **apcwo.org/books**. Many of these books are also available in other languages. To request your free copy of these books, please send an email to **bookrequest@apcwo.org**
*Available only as PDF

Also visit our church website for free Audio and Video sermons, Sermon notes (**apcwo.org/sermons**), and many other resources you can use.

ATTEND A WEEKEND SCHOOL

Weekend Schools, held in Bangalore, are geared to train and equip believers in specific areas of life and ministry. These are conveniently held on a Saturday 9am-6pm. Weekend schools are open to all believers from all churches and across denominations, who are interested in being trained and equipped. Below is a list of weekend schools that are currently being hosted.

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry
Weekend School of Healing and Deliverance
Weekend School on Gifts of the Spirit
Weekend School of Prayer and Intercession
Weekend School on Inner Wholeness
Weekend School on Lifestyle Evangelism
Weekend School on God@Work
Weekend School of Urban Missions and Church Planting
Weekend School on Christian Apologetics

Please visit: **apcwo.org/weekendschool** for current schedule and to register online

HOST A CHRISTIAN LEADERS CONFERENCE

All Peoples Church provides Spirit anointed equipping and impartation for pastors, local church leadership, leaders of Christian organizations and others engaging in Christian ministry. In addition to anointed teaching, Spirit-led ministry and impartation, our teams engage in personal interaction and discussions with participants. Each Christian Leaders Conference runs typically for 2 to 3 days focused on a specific theme. Participants will leave renewed, empowered, and equipped for greater impact and effectiveness in their ministry. Christian Leaders Conferences are typically hosted by a local church, a Christian ministry, a missions organization or denominational head-office for churches and pastors in its area or within its network or denomination. The hosting organization will cover the expenses of the conference as well as inviting participants. All Peoples Church will send its ministry team to serve the participants at the Christian Leaders Conference.

Some of the themes that our teams commonly minister on:

- **Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God**
- **Presence and Glory**
- **Kingdom Builders** (The Kingdom of God and Kingdom Building)
- **Level Ground**
- **The House of God**
- **Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry**
- **Ministering Healing and Deliverance**
- **Gifts of the Spirit**
- **Marriage and Family**
- **Equipping The Saints and Marketplace Transformation**

For additional details and a current listing of themes for Christian Leaders Conference, please visit: **apcwo.org/CLC**

To schedule and plan a Christian Leaders Conference please email us at:
contact@apcwo.org

About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven."

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so, He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God

has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

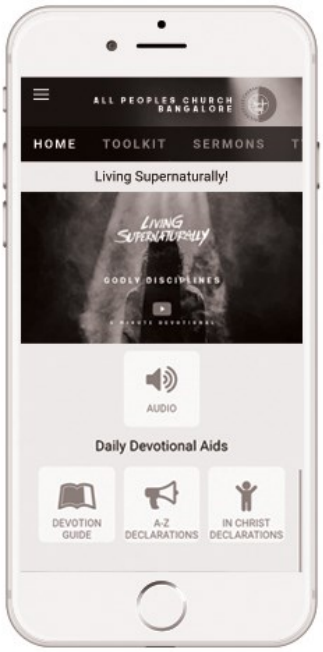
Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP!

Search for
"All Peoples Church Bangalore"
in the App or Google play stores.

Available on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google play



A daily 5-minute video devotional.
A daily Bible reading and prayer guide.
5-minute Sermon summary.
Toolkit with Scriptures on various topics to build faith and information to share the Gospel.
Resources with sermons, sermon notes, TV programs, books, music and more.

IF YOU LOVE IT, TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT!

All Peoples Church Bible College
apcbiblecollege.org

All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles - all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

We offer three programs:

- One-year Certificate in Theology and Christian Ministry (C.Th.)
- Two-year Diploma in Theology and Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.)
- Three- year Bachelor's in Theology and Christian Ministry (B.Th.)

Classes are held each weekday, **Monday to Friday from 9:00am-1pm**. Day scholars, working professionals, and homemakers can attend these classes and continue with their workday after 1pm. Separate hostel facilities are available for men and women who desire to be residential students. Students participate in field work, special seminars, prayer and worship times in the afternoon sessions, each weekday from 2pm-5pm. The afternoon sessions are optional for day scholars (non-residential students). All students are encouraged to serve at one or more local churches over the weekends.

To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: **apcbiblecollege.org**

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations Association for Theological Accreditation (NATA).

Though the Word of God is likened to honey being savored, daily bread being enjoyed, rain bringing refreshing, and a lamp giving direction, it is also like a fire burning up the chaff, a hammer breaking the rock into pieces and a double-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. A combined effect of the Word as hammer, fire, and sword should have the desired purifying effect on those areas of our lives that need cleansing!

Though it is true that God desires to work with us, there may be certain things in our lives that prevent God from working with us. Then those areas must be dealt with.

Self, jealousy, pride, and lust are some of the negatives that could hinder God from working with us. When we allow the Lord to lay the axe to the root and do a cleansing work in these areas of our lives, we will be better people, not only for God but also for each other.

Ashish Raichur

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